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CHAPTER THREE

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE NEEDS ARE BEING MET

TYPICAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Before attempting to draw general conclusions as to the extent to which the educational needs indicated in the previous chapter are being met, it may be useful to give a general picture of typical primary schools in Iraq. To speak of a 'typical' school is, of course, misleading, for every school has or should have its individual character. In general, however, most of the Iraqi primary schools have certain common characteristics which make it possible to venture a description of types.

A Typical Town Primary School. In each of the provincial capitals and most of the smaller towns are to be found large schools which may provide for between 300 and 500 pupils. The great majority of the urban primary schools are single sex schools. Such a school may have from ten to twelve rooms of varying sizes. The numbers in each class may vary from sixty to thirty, the smaller usually being the sixth or top class. The class-rooms are frequently overcrowded, with sometimes three children sitting on a desk built for two. Lighting and sanitary arrangements are generally not of a high standard. In some schools where available accommodation has not kept pace with the local demand for primary education, there may be as many as seventy children in one of the lower classes. Desks are not well constructed and generally show lack of maintenance.

In such a school, as in every other full-range primary school, there are six grades of class, the children being promoted from class to class each year provided they pass an examination indicating that they have satisfied the requirements of the centrally prescribed programme of studies. Those who do not pass the promotion examination are required to repeat the previous year's work.

The teachers seem to work very hard, they occupy the centre of the stage and either lecture to their pupils or follow the common technique of verbal question and answer. There is little activity on the part of the children apart from incredibly quick oral

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response, and there is not much evidence of handicraft or art. Outdoor physical education follows the prescribed syllabus which, however, seems to be more modern in technique than some of the other subjects.

Generally speaking, the older buildings look as depressing as their counterparts in some of the western countries. Unfortunately there are not many very recent buildings.

While these conditions apply to many of the schools, however, in the larger towns there are some noteworthy exceptions to which reference will be made later.

A Typical Village School. A village school may consist of two or three rooms housing from twenty to seventy pupils of both sexes, but it is rarely a complete six-class school. Lighting and sanitation are usually inferior to that of the town schools. In the northern provinces some of the schools are built of stone, but mostly they are made of dried mud bricks. In parts of the south, especially in the marsh districts, the buildings are reed huts.

The curriculum and teaching techniques in the village school are identical with those of the town school. The children rarely enjoy activity methods, and sit in their desks most of the time.

In many of the village schools children cannot complete their full period of primary schooling because the numbers are too small to permit the organization of the full six classes. In a minority of these schools, however, an increasing number of teachers are learning the technique of simultaneously teaching more than one attainment group and are thus able to provide a complete primary school course in an incomplete school.

Most of the village schools have no garden, handicraft or livestock. But the newly established agricultural primary schools, to which detailed reference will be made later, provide exceptions to this rule.

Because of the absence of compulsory school attendance and the consequent late admission to school of a number of pupils, there is a great variety of age-range in both urban and village schools. Within the limits of the curriculum, however, the teachers meet these difficulties with commendable patience, and both the older and the younger children in any one class are usually a happy family. Another happy feature of the Iraqi primary school is the absence of social distinctions within the class-room. A wealthy sheikh's son may rub shoulders with a poorly clad lad from a very humble home.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE NEEDS ARE MET QUANTITATIVELY

The Rapid Growth of the Primary Schools System. As will have been

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872 three years of primary schooling. Attention was directed to this striking educational phenomenon by a prominent Iraqi educator in 1942, in the following words:

> Iraq has not yet reached the stage where a compulsory education law is practicable. There are therefore no legal provisions that compel parents to send their children to school within specified age limits. Hence not only do the majority of children of school age enter no primary school, but of those who enter only a fraction remain to complete their primary education. The rest drop out of school at any point from the first to the sixth grade. This constitutes one of the major problems of primary education in Iraq and involves the waste of a great deal of money and effort.

More recent figures provided by another competent Iraqi educational researcher indicate that out of some 22,000 pupils who enrolled in the first classes of primary schools in the year 1940–41, some 16,000 reached the second class, 14,000 the third class, with numbers continuing to dwindle until 10,000 entered the sixth class. Of the 10,000 who stayed on at school until their last year, less than half officially completed the primary school course by gaining the primary school-leaving certificate in the year 1946.

This elimination of pupils, grade by grade, in the primary school represents a serious defect in the present system. There are several contributory reasons. One is obviously economic, parents in poor financial circumstances find that they cannot afford to dispense with the labour of their children. Other reasons for this dropping out of school are the disillusionment of parents who find that their children cannot surmount the repeated examination hurdles, and the fact that some of the village schools are incomplete. But perhaps a more significant reason, at any rate in the villages, is that it is felt, perhaps unconsciously, that the somewhat over-academic and excessively oral type of education is not sufficiently related to the future life of pupils, whose livelihood depends not so much upon bookishness as upon things more practical and related to real life situations. It is clear, however, that until compulsory education can be applied and enforced, the educational life of the minority who do attend primary schools is likely to be short and incomplete.

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Demands that are not being met. Despite the rapid growth both in the number of schools and in the number of children attending them, and although this great quantitative increase is badly offset by the number of children who do not complete the course, there can be no doubt that there is a public demand for more primary

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where many of the teachers maintain their educational faith despite the fact that they are by no means over-paid and have to live under poor domestic conditions with few amenities.

On the other hand, the general impression gained was that the curriculum of the primary school is seriously overloaded on the bookish and verbal side. This is confirmed by a glance at the official Programme of Studies for the primary schools:

Subject	Periods per week					
	1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	4th Class	5th Class	6th Class
Religion and Koran . .	4	4	3	3	2	2
Arabic	11	12	10	10	6	6
English	—	—	—	—	6	6
Arithmetic	6	6	6	6	5	5
Object lesson and hygiene	2	2	2	2	2	2
Geography and history	—	—	4	4	4	4
Morals and Civics . .	—	—	—	1	1	1
Drawing and handicraft	3	3	4	4	4	4
Physical education and singing	4	3	3	2	2	2

This programme, although it looks somewhat scholarly for young children is not, when one examines it in full detail as published by the Ministry of Education, illiberal. It does not, however, allow for much for experiment and flexibility in relation to the varying needs of growing children. The programme of studies is interpreted very literally and the method of learning is by class lectures and memorization. There is little in the way of active learning on the part of the pupils, and they do not appear to have opportunities of acquiring a sense of individual responsibility through the exercise of their own initiative.

One distinctive feature is the teaching of English by a very modern 'direct method' technique. But this, by its excellence, affords a striking contrast to the teaching of some of the other subjects. Although drawing and handicraft are included in the programme of studies, these subjects are mainly limited to copying designs or simple models, and the pupils gain very little experience in the use of tools.

It would obviously be unfair, after fleeting visits to a number of schools, to venture criticism of this kind, were it not for the fact that stronger objections to the over-academic conduct of most

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Some eight per cent of these tribal dwellers are still nomadic, and educational arrangements for them will obviously be most difficult to apply. People who are on the move, even if this be in regular seasonal cycles or over more or less fixed areas, are never susceptible to organized education. Even in countries where compulsory education laws have been in effect for several years and where school accommodation for the entire child population exists, it is not easy to make arrangements for the schooling of the children of mobile persons such as caravan and boat dwellers. Clearly, in a country like Iraq where the problem of mobility of population is of much greater magnitude, the conventional type of fixed village school is useless for these peoples. Some of them are not averse to education, and, especially in places where a sheikh is anxious that his own children shall be educated, there is an opportunity for providing educational facilities which would be shared by the other children of the tribal group. It is suggested, therefore, that the time is opportune for giving serious consideration to the training of peripatetic teachers of the kind recommended by the Monroe Commission in 1932.

The more urgent problem of tribal education relates to that majority of the tribal peoples who are in the stage of transition from nomadism to a more settled agricultural life. People who are passing through this transitional stage present great problems but also great opportunities to the educator. They are alleged to lose some of the simpler virtues of people who are forced to submit to the strict tribal laws and codes while they are still wandering in the desert. Be that as it may, they undoubtedly need practical education in the amenities of the more settled life, particularly in matters of health, child care under primitive housing conditions and agricultural practice. Their children also need schooling. These educational needs are becoming more acute because, as has been indicated in a previous chapter when discussing the problem of land tenure, the tribal peoples are losing their former wholesome relationship with the sheikh, who is becoming more of a landlord interested in the produce of his tenants and less of a leader with a responsibility for their welfare.

These needs of the tribal dwellers, therefore, and especially those who are in the semi-settled stage, present a formidable challenge to the Iraqi educator. What is probably needed to meet their peculiar requirements is a team of peripatetic teachers who could travel with the tribes while they are on the move, and who could establish simple schools-cum-community-centres in the places where the tribesmen and their families are gradually settling. So far as is known, devices of this kind are as yet untried; it would be well if a few young men and women of ingenuity and a practical

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876 turn of mind, and preferably from the tribal areas themselves,
166 could be specially trained as intensely practical teachers and then appointed to establish pilot projects of tribal education.

871 Some people with whom these possibilities have been discussed
69 are not optimistic about such attempts to meet the educational needs of the tribes. They maintain that the tribal dweller has a strong suspicion of anything that smacks of Government interference and that he would have nothing to do with publicly-provided education. There is, however, another point of view. The writer and an Iraqi inspector of schools were sitting in a Bedouin guest tent one evening recently, together with two sheikhs, one of whom is reputed to be amassing land for his own purposes and the other who is the more liberal minded son of a sheikh who once established two schools. The following conversation was heard and, for what it is worth, is quoted verbatim:

First sheikh: 'I hear that you have offered to provide a school building if the Government will provide teachers.'

Second sheikh: 'Yes, I would like a school for my son Silah and for the other boys of his age.'

First sheikh: 'If your people become educated they will be demanding more rights. You will be laying up trouble for the future.'

Second sheikh: 'I want my people to be educated so that they may become better human beings. The future is with those who are educated.'

There is, of course, always more than one point of view about educational matters. The point of view of the second sheikh is expressed in another way by an Iraqi educator who writes, 'The problem which the Iraq Government faces as regards the tribes, the solution of which should form one of the main civic aims of education in Iraq, is the broadening of the outlook and allegiance of the tribesmen from their narrow tribal limits to a national horizon'.

000 These then, are some of the economic, political and social problems which must be taken into consideration before any ambitious advance in the direction of compulsory education can be contemplated. It is only against this background that the realism of possible solutions to present educational difficulties can be judged. But these problems are not new and, despite the obstacles which they constitute, definite quantitative progress in the field of primary education has undoubtedly been achieved in recent years.

The next step must be to consider the practicability of making

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the area. If the project continues to progress at its present rate, it must undoubtedly be regarded as one of the most significant and far-reaching contributions to rural, social and ultimately educational progress in Iraq. Incidentally, it is understood that the Dujaila Committee which controls this and related schemes has, at present, no educational representative on it. It is desirable that such representation should be provided for, so that the economic and social changes which are taking place in the new communities may go hand in hand with consistent educational development. Further, the educators who are associated with the scheme would do well at all times to enlist the advice of the working farmers and agricultural advisers, so that the new schools to be provided there serve the needs of the local community more realistically than do most of the village schools.

SIGNIFICANT EDUCATIONAL ADVANCES

There are other developments which provide pointers towards progress in the right direction, educational movements which provide most hopeful clues to the lines along which future educational advance may proceed.

Some Progressive Primary Schools. Although most of the primary schools are uniform in their conformity to an over-bookish curriculum, a small minority of them are escaping into a freer educational environment with less rigid teaching and learning techniques.

Some of the demonstration primary schools attached to or used by the better training institutions are adopting methods which are much more in accord with the real educational needs of growing children. Similar developments are being encouraged by a small body of progressive primary school teachers both in Baghdad and in some of the provinces. In these schools there is less of rote and verbal memorization, and more activity on the part of the children themselves. In such schools the teacher is not so much a lecturer working according to a narrow interpretation of a centrally prescribed curriculum, but is rather a less obtrusive helper who aids the children to learn by their own initiative and enquiry. In some of these schools there are gardens made and enjoyed by the pupils; physical education is not so much 'drill' as the enjoyment of natural movement; attractive wall illustrations make the internal environment more cheerful; the spirit of play is harnessed to the process of learning.

Some of these schools, because of their experimental nature, are

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allowed a greater choice of textbooks than those prescribed in the official programme of studies. It is to be hoped that they will use their freedom to encourage the use of more colourful books for, although some of the textbooks prescribed by the central body are illustrated, most of them are devoid of colour.

These schools are bound to spread their influence to others, especially if some of the assistant teachers are prepared to leave the capital city and provincial centres for a time and are promoted to headships in some of the more remote schools.

The Kindergarten Movement. Side by side with this practice of livelier and more modern techniques in this limited minority of primary schools is the growth of a small but steadily extending kindergarten movement. One of these schools is attached to the primary teachers' training college for girls in Baghdad, and affords the teacher trainees the opportunity of seeing in a practical and vivid fashion the pursuit of modern educational methods in a way which they would never derive from the books they use. Others have been established in the large towns and provincial capitals, mainly through local effort and self-help.

These kindergarten schools are perhaps the liveliest and happiest educational institutions in Iraq. Generally they are in well-designed buildings which have been furnished carefully and pleasantly. Teaching aids, apparatus and wall illustrations are sometimes the best that could be found in any kindergarten school, even in countries whose educational systems are much older and supported by more public money. Fortunately also the teachers in such schools have considerable freedom to work in accordance with a curriculum based not on prescribed syllabuses but upon the observed needs of young children.

In the opinion of the writer the kindergarten movement is one of the most hopeful indications of real educational advance in Iraq. If the spirit and methods of these schools could be gradually embodied in the life of the primary schools and the primary schools left with a greater degree of freedom, there is a probability that this would be the beginning of a most wholesome revolution in educational method throughout the country.

A few of the primary schools have, indeed, within the limits of the prescribed syllabuses that they must follow, tried to embody some of the activity methods of the kindergarten school into their lower forms. Some attempt free drawing as apart from the almost universal copy drawing. Others not only have school magazines but encourage the pupils to edit them and contribute to them. That it is not easy, however, to persuade the teacher that education is something for its own sake and not merely an avenue to

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872 876 promotion, is indicated by the following extract from a teacher's introduction to the first issue of a primary school magazine:

'Our Magazine.
Dear Pupils,
This is the first number of our school magazine. I want every pupil to read it very carefully because it is for you, not for the teacher.
Please read this paper carefully and ask me any question about it. If you do as I say, you will succeed in the examination.
Your Teacher,
Signed .....'

874 654 *The Agricultural Primary Schools.* The need for realistic village schools in Iraq has been advocated in the Report of the Monroe Commission and elsewhere. They have taken a long time to materialize, but there are now signs of progress.

In 1948 the Ministry of Education requested the Provincial Directors of Education to establish an experimental primary school in each province. One such school has since been provided in most of the provinces, not as an entirely new project but as an extension of an existing primary school. Several acres of land have been attached to these schools and some of them keep a limited amount of livestock. Some have modest dairy equipment, a stock of hand tools for the pupils and an agricultural machine such as a power-driven cultivator. One or two have a tractor. In the irrigation districts some possess their own water pump.

Unfortunately these schools were established during a period of retrenchment, and although the Ministry of Education launched this important experiment it was apparently unable to provide the money for other essential buildings and equipment such as handicraft shops, simple laboratories and materials for experiment. It was also unable to provide every such school with a teacher acquainted with the basic practice and principles of farming. Despite these initial handicaps, some of the agricultural primary schools have started courageously and have attempted to free [177] themselves from a purely academic curriculum. In certain of the schools, apart from teaching methods of normal cultivation, experiments are being made in the growth of crops hitherto unfamiliar to the local economy. Indeed one teacher claims that, through his introduction of American cotton on to the school farm, the local landowner has since grown this crop on a large scale and has made a substantial profit from it. If this is so, it certainly illustrates the extra-mural influence of a village school which adjusts its curriculum to real life situations.

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871 of educational advance with many people in the localities, the writer is persuaded that there is a growing consciousness of the need for more primary schools. In province after province, and village after village, there were local notabilities who had provided school buildings from their own resources and others who were prepared to find the money for schools and furniture if the Ministry of Education would provide the teachers.

871 876 Significantly, some of these local people complained about what they described as 'absence of reality' in the work of the primary schools. They maintained that, while they are anxious that the children should learn to read and write, they would prefer that they were also taught in the schools how to handle tools, how to keep healthy, and how to till the soil. One parent complained that 'present day education is divorced from life and only goes skin deep'. He quoted an instance of an urban trained teacher who was giving a hygiene lecture in school, complete with a vivid illustration of the intestinal system, but was oblivious of the fact that flies were crawling over the faces of some of his listeners! The few women with whom it was possible to discuss educational affairs urged that cookery and homecraft should play an important part in the education of the older girls in the primary school. One farmer's wife said: 'I would prefer that my daughter learned how to sew rather than do geometry in school'.

871 Enough has perhaps been said by now to indicate that, although Iraq still has a long way to go before any realistic attempt to bridge the gap between the existing primary schools system and a complete system of compulsory education will be fruitful, changes of an economic, social and educational nature are taking place which give cause for sober optimism. It is now possible, in the light of these advances and changes in attitude and public opinion, to consider ways and means of promoting further advance in the educational field.

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a program for the introduction of compulsory primary education over the next 15 years. 872

The introduction of compulsory primary schooling will have to take into account varying economic conditions. It is often argued that most parents are unable to afford to send their children to school because children must go to work at an early age to help support the family. The high proportion of children who leave primary schools before finishing appears to support this thesis. However, these economic pressures will tend to diminish as the development program gets under way and opens up larger and more remunerative oportunities for employment to adults. Experience indicates that one of the first desires of parents who have improved their economic status is to provide better education for their children. Such a desire, for example, has already become manifest among the settlers in the Dujaila project. This does not mean, of course, that economic limitations must be ignored. It would be best to apply the principle of compulsion first in cities and more prosperous communities where economic pressures for the employment of children are least evident. In rural areas there may well be resistance to compulsory school attendance unless the period of schooling is adjusted to permit the help of children in the sowing and harvesting seasons. Some discretion should be permitted in adjusting school vacations to the harvesting periods in different parts of the country; and where schools need to remain open during busy agricultural seasons, the period of instruction should be so scheduled as to permit children to work part of the day in the fields.

Special problems must be met in connection with the education of the children of nomadic tribes. Here teachers trained from the ranks of the nomads themselves will have to travel with the tribes. The teaching syllabus will need to be adapted and simplified in order to take into account their special needs.

Revisions of the School Curriculum

As part of the program there should be a marked reorientation of the curriculum and methods of teaching. Learning is largely by rote. The children passively absorb information and learn comparatively little by actually doing things. Almost no 876 871

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876 attempt is made to develop their creative instincts. The curriculum
871 is far too bookish and academic and there is a great gulf between what is taught in school and the exigencies of practical life. Dr. Fadhel Jamali, a distinguished Iraqi educator and political figure, has aptly remarked that "no educational system is justified that does not give relief from the scourge of diseases nor aim at raising the standard of living and inculcating new ideas and techniques".

871 The school curriculum should be revised in the light of four principal objectives which have been well-stated by Mr. Victor Clark in his report on Compulsory Education in Iraq:

> "The first is the need for sound character training, including a realization that education is not simply a collection of skills and aids in preparation for a government or clerical job, but the acquisition of sound values which need to be applied in all walks of life whether professional or manual. The second important need is a knowledge of the practice and principles of good husbandry by those who work on the land. An equally important requirement in a minority of the population is the acquisition of technical skills necessary in local industries and in the growing demand for maintenance work. Finally, as is to be expected in a young country which is still engaged in the process of welding diverse racial and religious groups into conscious nationhood, it is considered that one of the most important needs is the promotion of knowledge and qualities necessary to the furtherance of national unity."[5]

Although there has been some demand that education in the villages should be given a "rural" bias and education in the cities a "vocational" bias, only half-hearted experiments in that direction have actually been carried out. In the future there should be much more emphasis on crafts in all schools. Properly guided children, who are naturally creative, will find joy in working skillfully with their hands and develop a pride in craftsmanship which has seriously declined in Iraq. The crafts which are taught should be as varied and as closely linked to local occupations as possible. Rural schools, in particular, should have small gardening plots where children can learn simple agricultural processes, the care of live-

[5] Victor Clark, *Compulsory Education in Iraq* (UNESCO, 1951), p. 18.

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devoted to children who drop out in the last three years must be regarded as at least a partial loss. Enlightened educational opinion all over the world is agreed that six to seven years is the minimum period in which a child can acquire the basic modicum of knowledge, skills, habits, interests and social attitudes necessary for civilized living in a modern community. The Iraq Government has prescribed six years as the period of primary schooling, but the objective is obviously not being achieved if more than half the children are eliminated, for one reason or another, before completing this period.

The Quality and Orientation of Education

It is sometimes contended that a program of nation-wide education should be postponed until the quality of education is considerably improved. While the Mission does not support this contention, it is firmly convinced that education will not win the support of the people or have any perceptible impact on their lives unless it is given a new orientation. It is, therefore, necessary to take simultaneous measures for the improvement of education—its methods and techniques, its curricula, its organization and administration and, above all, its personnel and their ideology and outlook. Education, as it is provided at present, is concerned with only a part of the child's development. It leaves a large area of his aptitudes and his mental and emotional make-up untouched.

In the proposed reconstruction of education, it will be most important to give it a more practical, realistic and rural bias in order to relate it intelligently to the psychological and social needs of the individual child and the adult society. It is a well-known fact of child psychology that the child is by nature an active, pragmatic person who delights in doing, creating, playing and generally expressing himself in various practical ways which grow increasingly purposeful with age. Unfortunately, the primary and secondary schools as well as training colleges at present seem to be hardly aware of the basic importance of bringing education into harmony with this crucial fact of child psychology. In fact, with the exception of a school handwork exhibition at Baquba, a promising display of handwork specimens in the Primary Teachers' Training College in Baghdad and some quite good examples of stitching and embroidery and the like in a few girls' schools, the schools were

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found to be entirely preoccupied with the classical and literary tradition. It is true that the Arab mind has a flair for language and literature and delights in oral self-expression, and young children learn to read and write quickly and speak with a fluency and feeling for words which children of other lands would find difficult to emulate. But with the increased importance of science and technology and the need of improving productive efficiency in industry, agriculture and other occupations, the people of Iraq cannot afford to remain content with a system of education which does not equip the younger generation to play its part in the projected plans of development.

Once educational authorities clearly recognize that the introduction of activity-centered methods and curricula and of craft work is basic to the whole idea of educational reconstruction, it should not be difficult to work out the necessary measures. In many other countries, such a reorientation of education has been actually achieved, and not only detailed theoretical discussion but records of concrete, practically worked-out schemes are available for consultation and guidance. It will, of course, not be possible—and even if it were possible, it would not be desirable—to copy these methods and schemes mechanically, because education is a creative field in which ideas have to be applied to the particular situation in which one is working. It will be necessary for Iraqi educators to work out their own pattern of "activity schools" and their appropriate forms of craft work. In fact, some gifted educators have already envisaged this problem in its true perspective. Dr. Matta Akrawi's thesis on *Curriculum Construction in the Public Primary Schools of Iraq* (published in 1942) is an effective presentation of the case for reorganized methods and curricula breaking with the narrow academic tradition. What is more, it gives concrete instances of how units in social studies and health education can be worked out in such a way as to break down the barriers between schooling and life.

What kind of crafts can be introduced in the village and city schools which will appeal to the children and will also be related to their environment so that they can leave school with trained skill and aptitudes and participate effectively in the work of their communities? The answer to this question can be given only after

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study, but two important considerations should be kept in mind. The crafts should be as varied as possible and linked to local occupations, and they should make maximum use of cheap local materials so that the cost of their introduction will not be too high. The object would not be to produce trained craftsmen, but to make children adept at working with their hands, to give them an opportunity for creative expression and to inculcate an appreciation of the value of manual labor. For the same reason the teachers need not be specialists in individual crafts, but people who are handy with tools, can work with different materials and in different media, and have a general understanding of the principles, objectives and methods of craft work by children.

In rural schools in particular, it is important to have small plots of land for gardening and agriculture where children can learn simple agricultural processes and the care of livestock as well as the use of tools. They should also have the opportunity to visit any government demonstration farms in the neighborhood. In order to insure that rural schools really cater to rural needs it will be necessary to draw more teachers from rural areas and to establish more rural training colleges where effective practical as well as theoretical training is given in agricultural subjects. More rural secondary schools with a dominantly agricultural bias in their curricula are also needed. They can serve the dual function of providing teacher candidates with suitable education and background and also of providing centers for agricultural extension work in the neighborhood.

One of the primary objectives of the reorientation of education should be to challenge children to meet the problems of their environment squarely instead of running away from them. A school is not just a place for academic learning or even a combination of academic and practical work. It is essentially a community where young people should learn the basic art of living through actual experience. It should afford opportunities for cooperative and group work, for leadership and discipline, and at the same time place before the children projects and activities which will enable them to understand the problems which dominate the life of their local, and later national, community. The school should inculcate an appreciation of the value and dignity of hard, manual work. Th

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876 this way the school can contribute to a much needed spirit of social service among children and youth at various stages of education. Thus a school lesson will become a living experience and bridges will be thrown across the gulf that exists between education and life to their mutual advantage and enrichment. These may appear, to the layman or the traditionally minded teacher, to be rather theoretical and remote considerations. But unless school problems are envisaged in these broad terms, the school will never become a dynamic and life-giving agency for the nation. And in fact, these considerations have been incorporated to varying degrees in the educational systems of many advanced countries and in many progressive schools.

In any reorientation of educational methods there must also be a simplification of the syllabus. The tendency has been to overload the syllabus with many subjects, all of which the child is expected to memorize primarily for the purpose of passing examinations. In the primary schools there are nine or ten subjects; in the secondary schools the total goes to 10-12; and in the training colleges as many as 15 different subjects are taught in one year. The contents of the existing syllabus in each subject and at each stage of education must be critically re-examined in the light of individual and social needs, and curricular cargo which is merely traditional and outdated must be thrown overboard. The Ministry is itself aware of this situation, and well-informed educators and some committees appointed in recent years to examine primary and secondary school curricula have drawn attention to this urgent problem. Dr. Matta Akrawi's thesis, to which reference has already been made, formulates comprehensively and soundly the principles which should guide workers in this field and provides practical illustration of what can be done. Care must be taken to vary the syllabus in accordance with local needs and to leave the teachers some opportunity for experimentation. For example, in bringing educational facilities to the nomads and the remote villagers, it must be remembered that the needs of the children and the adults living in these more primitive communities are different and in many ways more limited than those of the more sophisticated urban residents on whom the impact of modern civilization has been more direct and greater. It is, therefore, essential that the

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Ministry prepare a simplified syllabus and curriculum for such rural areas. It should concentrate on the basic essentials of knowledge and skills related to everyday living that can be easily grasped. This applies both to the school program for children in schools and to the program of fundamental education for adults.

Steps Toward Compulsory Primary Education

Many problems and difficulties will undoubtedly arise in enforcing compulsory education, but once the need is recognized and the policy agreed upon, attention can be concentrated on solving them. Public opinion in certain regions and groups will have to be educated; a careful survey of each locality will be needed to assess the existing educational provision as well as future needs; an effective administrative and supervisory organization will have to be established; some special provision will have to be made for children who cannot afford books or midday meals or whose parents want their help in work on their farms; and, most of all, the type of education to be provided will have to be related intelligently to the real needs of rural or urban life so that the children, as well as their parents, may feel that it is really worth their while and perceptibly useful. The special problems and difficulties of Bedouin education will have to be carefully examined.

Fortunately, a good deal of exploratory work of a theoretical nature has been done and, as already pointed out, a number of valuable studies are available which offer useful suggestions in all these fields. The Report of the Monroe Commission lays down general principles of educational reorganization, some of which have special relevance for primary education; Clark's Report is a good and careful, if rather unduly cautious, study of the issues involved in the introduction of compulsion; Dr. Jamali's book, *The Education of the Bedouins,* is a sympathetic and penetrating study of the whole sociological and psychological background of this problem; Dr. Akrawi's thesis on curriculum construction tackles competently the question of how the curriculum can be related dynamically to "the political, economic, social, hygienic and educational conditions and problems of the country;" and the Departmental Ten Year Plan and certain reports of other government committees endorse to some extent the various suggestions made in these studies. Theory has yet to be translated into practice,

7: International Bank N, S-4 (1951) 1952 MH1 Iraq MH1

wise investment to spend some money on intelligent research and experimentation in this field. The program of buildings should also include, as suggested above, the construction of teachers' houses—particularly for women teachers—in places where they are not otherwise available.

More attention might well be paid to the equipment of new and existing schools. The libraries, for instance, are generally poor: the number of books is small; they are not chosen with reference to the needs of the children for whom they are meant; their arrangement and display leave much to be desired; and the service provided is very unsatisfactory. No proper individual records of students' reading are maintained and no imaginative steps are taken to stimulate the desire to read and to make the library a dynamic and integral part of the school and of the life of the students. The library often consists simply of a few crowded, dust-laden bookshelves in one of the classrooms to which students have access at odd times and for short periods for borrowing books. School libraries not only should be stocked with a large number of well-displayed and suitable books but should be made the most pleasant and attractive place in the school.

The laboratory and workshop facilities provided, even in full-fledged secondary schools, are also inadequate. There can be no proper teaching of science or crafts unless the equipment is greatly improved and practical work is given its due place. Apparently there is no examination in practical work at all at the end of the secondary school, and obviously there can be none so long as most schools have no laboratories or workshops, or very poor apologies for them. In fact, of the large number of secondary schools visited, only two, one government institution and one foreign school, had adequate laboratories. Under the circumstances, science is generally taught theoretically, as a lesson from the printed book or as a lecture by the teacher, with occasional demonstration of experiments by him in front of the class. This kind of vicarious experimentation, which never allows the students to handle any apparatus, does little to foster the scientific attitude. The provision of laboratory facilities will not by itself, however, make any great difference—what is needed is the introduction of activity methods in the teaching of science and the use of science as an instru-

44:Matthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 MI Middle East
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marking papers jointly and submitting a final report on examination results to the principal. 873

The class teacher conducts quizzes and topical tests and midyear examinations, but final examinations are given by the study committees. These are confidential, with numbers substituted for names on the examination books, and those who mark the books are not supposed to know the identity of the student whose book is being corrected. The passing mark for individual subjects is 50—except in religion, which must be 60. The final yearly mark for any subject is determined by dividing averages of daily and topical tests plus the midyear examination mark by three and then adding this quotient to the final examination mark and dividing by two. To pass, a student must not fall below 50 in any individual subject and must have a general average of 60. A delinquent student may sit for re-examination in September in subjects in which he has failed or hopes to raise his mark. Third- and fifth-year students do not take the final school examinations because they sit for public intermediate or secondary examinations.

The last section of the regulations deals with discipline and student [876] behavior. As incentives to study and good behavior, prize awards to the best student in a class and to the best class, public commendation of leading students, and appointment of such students as monitors of their classes are mentioned. Various punishments are specified, ranging from an oral warning by the principal to expulsion. Expulsion, however, is valid for only one year, at the end of which the Ministry of Education may look into the case with a view to reinstating the pupil. Cheating in the topical tests or in the midyear examination is punished by a zero in that examination, but a student caught cheating in any final examination is failed in the whole year's work. Corporal punishment and other harsh methods of dealing with students are expressly forbidden.

While the secondary-school regulations are similar in spirit and import to those of the primary school, a few differences exist. Primary education is free to all, while secondary education operates on the basis of low fees with extensive exemption granted poor boys and girls of little more than average record. As a group, secondary-school teachers enjoy a greater freedom of action within the school than do primary teachers; their teachers council has greater powers and they have the nucleus of an academic organization within the school. However, secondary-school teachers, as well as primary, have little opportunity to deviate from the prescribed courses of study and textbooks. The primary-school teacher is essentially a grade teacher, while the secondary-school teacher is a subject teacher. Secondary schools are inspected administratively by the provincial director of educa-